

### 15. ARRIVAL DATES OF FANTAIL AND PINTAIL SNIPE IN BURMA

Colonel Phythian-Adams's series of articles entitled 'Jungle Memories' has been an unmixed delight to one whose knowledge of natural history is mainly derived from days spent in shikar. But a statement in the last article [Vol. 50 (3), p. 457] seems open to question. Referring to snipe, he says that 'at Bhambo . . . the Fantails used to arrive first, towards the end of August'.

Smythies ('Birds of Burma') says of the pintail snipe that it arrives 'in Northern Burma in the first week of August', and of the Fantail that it 'arrives nearly a month after the first Pintail'.

Stuart Baker ('Game Birds of India', Vol. II) says of the pintail snipe that it arrives 'early in August', while the fantail 'seldom arrives in India until August is well advanced, and even then will only be found in the extreme north'.

In Manipur, where I was stationed for many years, the Club's game-book records from 1911 to 1932 show only 12 fantail snipe killed in August, as against 4254 pintails. The earliest fantail was shot on August 16th.

My records of snipe-shooting in the Assam Valley do not cover so long a period, but my game-book only shows one fantail killed in August, as against 386 pintails. It was shot on August 19th. Five years in the Khasi Hills, just south of the Assam Valley, show 32 August pintails, against no fantails.

There is no doubt that in N.-E. India the southern migration of the pintail snipe precedes that of the fantail by some days, if not weeks, and, according to Smythies, the same applies to Burma. Is Colonel Phythian-Adams's statement that the fantail used to arrive first at Bhamo a slip of the pen?

ALFORD,  
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[Col. Phythian-Adams whose attention was drawn to Mr. Higgins's letter, writes that his statement of fantails arriving in Bhamo *before* pintails was based entirely on memory and that it is manifestly incorrect.—EDS.]

### 16. EXTERMINATION OF SNAKES UPSETS BALANCE OF NATURE

With regard to rats in the forests, I have come across the following observation in a report made in 1936 by the late A. J. W. Milroy, a distinguished Conservator of Forests of Assam and a very keen and knowledgeable naturalist. He observed that 'a three-year lease for catching snakes and monitor-lizards for their skins ended on March 31st. . . . it has been found to upset the balance of nature, resulting in serious damage by rats in our plantations, and no such mahals (leases) will be constituted again.'